



ISSUE

Working to prevent gun violence

MMA Position

To prevent gun violence, firearm-related accidents and firearm-related deaths due to suicide, the MMA supports common sense changes to gun laws, as well as addressing the issue with research and evidence-based strategies that can reduce morbidity and mortality.

Background

Gun violence and firearm-related accidents kill more than 30,000 Americans each year. Gun violence is a public health crisis. Strategies needed to prevent and address this crisis include advocacy for gun violence research funding, common sense gun laws at the state and federal level, as well as equipping physicians with the necessary tools to discuss gun violence prevention in the exam room.

In Minnesota, there were more than 400 firearm-related deaths in 2016, with more than 300 of those deaths being suicides. Suicide accounts for nearly 60 percent of all firearm-related deaths in the U.S., with men overwhelmingly choosing firearms as their primary method.

Appropriate research funding is needed to gain a better understanding of gun violence and is needed to develop programs that will assist in the prevention of premature deaths from guns. Epidemiologic data is not consistently collected, and much of this is due to not all U.S. states reporting their surveillance data to the National Violent Death Reporting System.

Two examples of legislation that has been introduced in Minnesota to address this crisis include: the expansion of criminal background checks (HF8, SF434) and adopting a “red flag” law (HF9, SF436) that would allow relatives and law enforcement to ask a judge to take firearms away from individuals who are deemed a serious threat to others or themselves.

Talking Points

- The MMA supports common-sense changes to gun laws that will promote safe and responsible gun ownership including:
 - criminal background checks on all purchases and transfers/exchanges of firearms
 - enforcement of laws that will hold sellers accountable when they sell firearms to prohibited purchasers
 - investment in improved data collection, analysis and research on firearm injury prevention
 - strengthening of the ban on civilian ownership of military-style weapons
 - prohibiting high-capacity magazines.
 - requirements for the safe storage of firearms.
- Some of the policies recently adopted by the MMA Board of Trustees include:
 - advocating for schools as gun-free zones
 - establishing laws allowing family members, intimate partners, household members, and law enforcement personnel to petition a court for the removal of a firearm when there is a high or imminent risk for violence
 - supporting mandatory inclusion of safety devices on all firearms
 - supporting bans on the possession and use of firearms and ammunition by unsupervised youths under the age of 21
 - opposing federal concealed carry reciprocity.
- The MMA supports improved access to and coverage of comprehensive mental health services.
- Most individuals with mental illness are not violent and not responsible for gun violence. This misconception stigmatizes those with mental illness and distracts us from awareness that a large percentage of firearm deaths are due to suicide.
- The MMA encourages and supports the identification of individuals at risk for violence or self-harm.
- Physicians and other health care providers have a responsibility to talk to patients about responsible firearm ownership and safe storage in the home.